United Nations S/2013/297

Security Council

Distr.: General
20 May 2013

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and on the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request contained in the statement of the President of the Security Council dated 19 December 2012 (S/PRST/2012/28), in which the Security Council requested me to keep it informed on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the progress in the implementation of the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (S/2012/481). The report assesses the major political trends in the Central African subregion since my last report (S/2012/923), dated 13 December 2012, provides an update on progress in implementing the mandate of UNOCA, and reports on ongoing efforts to counter the threat and impact of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

II. Major developments in the Central African subregion

A. Political, peace and security developments

2. During the reporting period, following its withdrawal from the ceasefire agreement signed in Libreville on 11 January 2013, the Séléka launched a new military offensive against the Government in the Central African Republic resulting in the unconstitutional removal of President François Bozizé on 24 March 2013. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has taken the lead in addressing the crisis. It has organized four extraordinary summits of Heads of State and Government dedicated to the situation in the Central African Republic. ECCAS also appointed a Mediator, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo. Meanwhile, the African Union Peace and Security Council has also closely followed the situation in the Central African Republic. It decided on 25 March to suspend the country from all African Union activities and to impose an asset freeze and travel ban on the Séléka leadership. The Peace and Security Council has subsequently met three times to discuss the situation in the Central African Republic. The African Union and the ECCAS Mediator co-chair the International

13-34049 (E) 240513

Please recycle

Contact Group on the Central African Republic, which held its inaugural meeting in Brazzaville, on 3 May 2013.

3. The ongoing political, security, human rights and humanitarian crises in the country have had a significant impact on the Central African subregion. Notably, there has been an increase in the number of refugees from the Central African Republic into neighbouring countries, and the numbers continue to rise. As at 3 May 2013, more than 49,000 Central African refugees had fled to neighbouring countries, primarily Cameroon, Chad, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since December 2012, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered 35,540 new refugees from the Central African Republic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 6,728 refugees in Chad, 1,024 in Cameroon, and 400 in the Congo. The plight of Central African refugees prompted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, to visit the region on 12 April 2013, with a particular focus on the refugees located in the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

4. There has also been an increase in the availability and circulation of weapons in the subregion, including in areas hosting Central African refugees. For example, on 13 April 2013, Cameroonian security elements recovered a large stock of weapons, uniforms and ammunition in Garoua Boulaye, a small town on the border between Cameroon and the Central African Republic where about a thousand Central African refugees were accommodated.

5. Furthermore, the crisis in the Central African Republic has had repercussions on efforts to address the threat and impact of the activities of LRA. The precarious security situation in the Central African Republic led the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), who are part of the African Union Regional Task Force against the Lord's Resistance Army, to temporarily suspend their operations in the Central African Republic. However, at a meeting with my Special Representative in April, the Ugandan authorities assured that its forces in the Central African Republic would continue their efforts to eliminate the threat of LRA (see section IV).

6. Meanwhile, the security situation in the Sahel continued to be of concern for Central Africa. The Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) held an extraordinary summit to discuss the security situation in the Sahel on 16 February, in N'Djamena. At the meeting it was decided to create two organs within CEN-SAD: the permanent council for sustainable development in the fight against poverty, and a permanent security council to help rid the region of terrorists and other threats to peace.

7. The spread of cross-border criminal activities in the subregion including poaching, mainly targeting elephants, is another growing security concern in Central Africa. During the period under review, it emerged that Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and Gabon in particular are facing this problem.

8. In January 2013, the Agence gabonaise des parc nationaux released a report showing a tremendous decline in the elephant population in Gabon. Indeed, between 2004 and 2013, more than 11,000 elephants were slaughtered in the Minkebe Park area alone, in north-eastern Gabon. Gabon is not the only country targeted by poachers. In March 2013, 86 elephants, including 33 pregnant females, were slaughtered within a week in Chad. In Cameroon, recent data from the Government and specialized non-governmental organizations show that poachers decimated more

than 300 elephants in the northern area of Bouba Ndjida National Park in the last two months of 2012.

9. My Special Representative for Central Africa was also informed during consultations with national authorities and stakeholders in the subregion that illegal ivory trade may currently constitute an important source of funding for armed groups, including LRA. Also of concern is that poachers are using more and more sophisticated and powerful weapons, some of which, it is believed, might be originating from the fallout in Libya. The situation has become so serious that national authorities in some countries, such as Cameroon, have decided to use the national army, in addition to law and order enforcement agencies (police and gendarmerie) to hunt down poachers.

10. Youth unemployment continues to pose a potential risk for peace and security in Central Africa. High rates of unemployment among young people, combined with poverty and wide income gaps between rich and poor, put social cohesion under stress and endanger national stability and peace. In my report to the Security Council dated 13 December 2012 (S/2012/923), I expressed my grave concern about the high rates of youth unemployment in Central Africa and stressed the urgent need to address this issue. UNOCA is currently working with other entities, including the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the International Organization of la Francophonie, to hold a regional forum on youth employment, political stability and peacebuilding in Central Africa by the last quarter of 2013.

11. Armed robbery at sea and acts of piracy continued to be a major security concern for countries of the Central African subregion. On 22 February 2013, countries of the subregion participated in a multinational military exercise, named "Obangame Express 2013", designed to improve cooperation on maritime safety and security among States in the Gulf of Guinea. The exercise, jointly organized by the United States Africa Command, the United States Naval Forces Africa and the Cameroon Ministry of Defence, is an annual event initiated in 2011.

12. Finally, during the reporting period, one country in the subregion organized elections: the senatorial elections in Cameroon of 14 April 2013. The political parties that participated were the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the National Union for Democracy and Progress, and the Cameroon Democratic Union. The elections were monitored by several national and international organizations, including the African Union, Transparency International, and the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms. There was a consensus that the elections were free and fair, despite some minor irregularities. On 29 April 2013, the Supreme Court, sitting in lieu of the Constitutional Council, announced that CPDM had won 56 of the 70 seats, while SDF won the remaining 14 seats. The President of Cameroon, Paul Biya, will appoint the remaining 30 senators, in accordance with the Constitution.

B. Socioeconomic trends

13. During the period under review, the majority of countries in Central Africa continued to enjoy strong economic growth rates. This progress is due, among other things, to the dynamism of extractive industries. Oil-producing countries especially continued to improve their macroeconomic situation. A number of non-oil-producing

countries also continued to record respectable growth rates. A recent report of the Economic Commission for Africa shows that Central Africa, as a whole, is currently among the African subregions with the highest positive real per capita GDP growth. Although slightly in decline, States members of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa[1] (CEMAC), for instance, continue to display strong economic growth prospects, between 4 and 5 per cent in 2013.

14. However, economic growth in Central Africa, although strong and sustained, is not yet inclusive. Vast segments of the populations in many States continue to live in abject poverty. The gap between rich and poor is growing in the subregion, with the rich in a number of countries becoming increasingly richer and the poor increasingly poorer. The high economic growth rates in Central Africa have yet to be translated into poverty reduction. The 2013 edition of the UNDP *Human Development Report* shows that 4 of the 10 countries with the lowest human development index in the world are in Central Africa, and 8 of the 10 States members of ECCAS are ranked in the category of countries with a low human development index.

15. On issues relating to regional and international economic partnership, the seventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States was hosted by Equatorial Guinea on 13 and 14 December 2012. Participants agreed to broaden their partnerships rather than maintain privileged relations with the European Union. The Summit adopted the Malabo Declaration in which it approved a troika panel of Heads of State to represent the group in its negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreements with the European Union. At the subregional level, ECCAS and CEMAC continued their efforts towards a single economic community within the subregion. The two institutions held a meeting in Yaoundé on 13 February 2013 to consider and adopt the terms of reference for 12 priority areas for harmonization of economic policies in Central Africa.

C. Human rights and gender

16. During the period under review, freedom of expression and the situation of journalists remained very precarious in some countries in Central Africa. Despite the proliferation of private media and the existence of regulatory institutions in most countries of the subregion, prison sentences for press offences was a major concern. Journalists and cyberjournalists continued to be victims of arrests, arbitrary detentions, intimidation, pressure, censorship and imprisonment. In some countries, programmes (radio and television) were often suspended when they dealt with issues that were considered critical of the Government.

17. Improving the legal environment for media and socioeconomic conditions of journalists is necessary to enable them to play their role in promoting human rights, peace and peacebuilding in the subregion.

18. With respect to women's rights, women and girls in the region continued to suffer from a significantly high incidence of female genital mutilation, early forced marriage, harassment of widows, and lack of access to education. In terms of

[1] The States members of CEMAC are: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.

women's political participation, Central Africa continues to register a very low participation of women in decision-making positions, including in Parliament, averaging 20 per cent, with the exception of two countries, Rwanda, 56.3 per cent and Burundi, 32.4 per cent. Most of the countries in the subregion face challenges in advancing the gender equality agenda in critical areas such as health and education.

III. Activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

A. Supporting Member States and subregional organizations

19. During the period under review, UNOCA and the secretariat of ECCAS continued to work closely in support of regional efforts to prevent conflict and consolidate peace in the 10 States members of ECCAS.[2]

20. In this regard, my Special Representative and the Secretary-General of ECCAS, Nassour Guelengdouksia Ouaidou, met regularly to review major political and security developments in the subregion and seek ways of addressing them. My Special Representative also invited ECCAS to participate in his regular briefings to the international diplomatic community accredited to Gabon on the political and security situation in the subregion. The last briefing was held on 2 May.

21. At the technical level, senior officials of the two institutions continued to meet on a monthly basis. UNOCA and ECCAS also held a review session in February 2013 to assess progress in the implementation of the framework of cooperation signed in May 2012. The framework of cooperation focuses on the following areas: governance; electoral processes; mediation and good offices; security, including efforts to combat the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons and piracy and armed robbery at sea; and training and strengthening institutional capacity.

22. In this regard, progress has been made in the area of mediation and good offices. A framework for a regional strategy for mediation and conflict prevention in Central Africa is expected to be introduced to the Heads of State and Government of the subregion during the next ECCAS Summit. The framework was developed on the basis of the recommendations from the capacity-building workshop held in November 2012 in Libreville. Some ECCAS staff who participated in the capacity-building workshop were involved in the negotiation of the Libreville Agreements, and continue to provide support to their implementation.

23. On security aspects, UNOCA continued its fruitful collaboration with ECCAS on piracy and armed robbery at sea (see paras. 26-28). UNOCA also facilitated the effective participation of ECCAS in the third ministerial meeting of the African Union Joint Coordination Mechanism for the operationalization of its Regional Cooperation Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army, held in Addis Ababa on 24 April, where, among other things, the situation in the Central African Republic was discussed in relation to its impact on the fight against LRA.

[2] The States members of ECCAS are: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.

B. Preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding

24. As part of efforts to address the threat of terrorism in the Sahel and Maghreb, my Special Representative participated in a regional conference on border control in the Sahel and Maghreb regions, held in Rabat, from 13 to 15 March 2013. The conference was organized by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. At that meeting, my Special Representative reported on the experience of Central Africa on this issue, notably on discussions held at the counter-terrorism workshop organized in December 2012 on the sidelines of the 35th ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in Brazzaville, as well as the putting in place of a network of focal points which would develop a subregional strategy against terrorism and the proliferation of light weapons. The conference adopted a number of recommendations, including the need to enhance national, bilateral and regional cooperation through the regular exchange of sensitive information and joint training for border officials of countries in the Sahel and Maghreb regions and the creation of national and regional databases on terrorist movements and activities.

25. During the period under review, UNOCA began preparations for the 36th ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, to be held in Malabo in July 2013. In this regard, an official mission was carried out to Malabo from 27 April to 5 May 2013.

C. Piracy and armed robbery at sea committed off the coast of the States of the Gulf of Guinea

26. In line with Security Council resolution 2039 (2012), my Special Representatives for Central Africa and West Africa continued to support ongoing preparations for the convening of the regional Summit of Heads of State and Government on maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, to be held in Cameroon on 24 and 25 June 2013. They facilitated meetings among ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission and with various partners. They also sensitized stakeholders and partners on the importance of the implementation of resolution 2039 (2012).

27. A ministerial meeting on maritime security and armed robbery at sea was held in Cotonou, Benin, on 19 March 2013 with the participation of 25 countries and experts from partner institutions. UNOCA participated in the drafting of three key documents which were adopted at the meeting, namely, the ECCAS/ECOWAS Political Declaration on Illicit Maritime Activities in the Gulf of Guinea; a memorandum of understanding between ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission; and a code of conduct for the three entities.

28. As a follow-up to the ministerial meeting, my Special Representative for Central Africa also extensively consulted and mobilized relevant stakeholders in the subregion, including Cameroon and the Secretary-General of ECCAS. From his regular exchanges, it has emerged that positive and encouraging steps are being taken towards the smooth organization of the Summit. Meanwhile, UNOCA, working closely with ECCAS, will continue to mobilize the subregion and raise awareness on the importance of the Summit.

IV. Lord's Resistance Army

A. Current situation

29. Suspected LRA attacks continued to be reported in remote border areas of the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While access challenges and the multiplicity of armed actors, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, often obstruct systematic tracking of LRA activities, some 212 LRA attacks were reported in 2012, resulting in 45 deaths and 220 abductions, 25 per cent of them involving children. Some 66 suspected LRA attacks were also reported during the first quarter of 2013 in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting in 30 deaths and 87 abductions, 10 per cent of them involving children. March 2013 saw a spike in presumed LRA incidents, with 30 attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, more than in any other month since January 2012.

30. More than 420,000 people remain displaced in LRA-affected areas in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. This includes over 390,000 internally displaced persons, the vast majority of whom (nearly 320,000) are in Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé districts of Orientale Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. It also includes over 29,000 refugees, mostly in South Sudan.

31. There were no reports of LRA attacks in South Sudan during the reporting period. The last attack was reported in June 2011. This could be attributed to the presence of UPDF, and their cooperation with the Sudan People's Liberation Army, and of a community-based group known as home guards which have pushed LRA from South Sudan into the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The improvement in the security situation allowed some 21,000 people to return to Ezo, Maridi, Mundri, Nzara, Tambura and Yambio counties in Western Equatoria State in 2012. However, 49,000 people remain displaced as a result of LRA attacks. South Sudan also hosts 18,370 Congolese and 1,589 Central African refugees.

32. While the direct threat of LRA attacks has diminished, its impact continues to be felt in the form of large numbers of internally displaced persons — 49,000 — and about 20,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, located in camps near urban centres in Western Equatoria State, areas perceived to be most secure but with attendant challenges of food shortages, overcrowding, infectious diseases and a general lack of social services. Although the Government of South Sudan, with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), has established a child protection unit to support the reintegration of returning abductees, it lacks capacity to provide wide-ranging support.

33. According to the Government of the Sudan, there are no LRA elements in Kafia Kingi. Reports from various sources, however, continue to suggest the existence of an LRA base in the disputed enclave on the border between the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Sudan, perpetuating fear and preventing internally displaced persons and refugees from returning to their homes.

34. Meanwhile, the situation in Bas-Uélé remained sensitive as several attacks attributed to suspected LRA elements were reported in Ango territory, on the

Dungu-Faradje and Niangara-Ngilima-Bangadi axis. The large and porous border between the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the absence of border authorities, allows LRA splinter and other unidentified groups to move between both countries.

35. On 21 March 2013, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) received 27 abductees released by LRA close to Digba in Bas-Uélé. The group was composed of eight adults, nine children (under the age of 18) and nine infants (under the age of 3) originating from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and Uganda. It is the largest group released in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in several years. All unaccompanied children were handed over to the child protection section, while the adults from South Sudan and the Central African Republic were repatriated by MONUSCO.

B. Coordination and resource mobilization

36. In its presidential statement of 19 December 2012 (S/PRST/2012/28), the Security Council requested a prioritized and sequenced implementation plan to support the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the Lord's Resistance Army (S/2012/481). The Security Council also requested that the implementation plan identify key projects that support the priority activities of the strategy.

37. In response to that request, on 11 and 12 February my Special Representative and the African Union Special Envoy on the LRA issue, Francisco Madeira, co-chaired a meeting of LRA focal points in Entebbe, Uganda, to review and discuss a draft implementation plan. National, regional, international and civil society partners also participated in the meeting. As a result of the meeting and of subsequent consultations with LRA stakeholders, I submitted to the Council on 19 April 2013 the implementation plan for the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (S/2013/240, annex).

38. The implementation plan provides an overview of the impact of the LRA strategy and progress in its implementation. It highlights the work that has been conducted by the United Nations system since the adoption of the strategy, in close collaboration with the African Union and in support to LRA-affected countries, within existing resources and with extrabudgetary contributions. The implementation plan also details short- and medium-term priorities within the five strategic areas of intervention identified in the LRA strategy, with corresponding projects that require funding. In addition, it assigns specific roles and responsibilities to the various stakeholders working on the LRA issue. Three levels of coordination of LRA-related activities are identified: global (led by UNOCA); thematic (with one United Nations entity covering each goal); and country-specific. Finally, the implementation plan establishes timelines and clarifies lead entity and reporting mechanisms.

C. Implementation of the strategy

1. Operationalization and full implementation of the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army

39. During the reporting period, the strategic documents required for the operationalization of the African Union Regional Task Force against the LRA were finalized. The African Union Joint Coordination Mechanism on LRA met at the level of Chiefs of Defence Staff in Bangui on 20 December 2012. That meeting reviewed the regional Task Force's command directives, concept of operations, rules of engagement and standard operating procedures. The documents were endorsed by the Ministers of Defence of the Joint Coordination Mechanism in Addis Ababa on 15 January 2013. UNOCA participated in both meetings.

40. In addition, my Special Representative, in close collaboration with the African Union Special Envoy on LRA, continued to advocate with LRA-affected countries to mobilize support for the full implementation of the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army.

41. They encouraged the affected countries to increase their troop contribution towards the 5,000 authorized troops for the African Union Regional Task Force. On 13 February, my Special Representative and the African Union Special Envoy on the LRA issue travelled to Dungu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, to participate in a ceremony to formally hand over 500 troops from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Task Force. The LRA-affected countries have to date officially contributed 3,350 troops to the Task Force.

42. My Special Representative and the African Union Special Envoy also travelled to three out of the four LRA-affected countries (South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda) from 27 March to 4 April 2013. They met with government authorities, bilateral partners, representatives of the United Nations system and other stakeholders.

43. Furthermore, efforts continued to be made to ensure that the Task Force has sufficient funding and resources available. In March 2013, the African Union equipped the Task Force headquarters with VSAT communications in order to facilitate communication with the African Union in Addis Ababa. The African Union convened a support forum on 24 April 2013, also in Addis Ababa. The meeting was organized with support from the United Nations Office to the African Union and with the participation of UNOCA, in preparation for a joint African Union-United Nations resource mobilization meeting to be held during the second half of 2013.

44. Finally, a new challenge for the full operationalization of the Task Force emerged during the reporting period, and was discussed during the third ministerial meeting of the Joint Coordination Mechanism, held in Addis Ababa on 22 and 23 April 2013. Participants expressed their concern about the impact of the crisis in the Central African Republic on the fight against LRA. In particular, participants raised the possibility of a confrontation in Obo between Séléka troops and the Ugandan troops deployed as part of the regional Task Force. The African Union Special Envoy on LRA led a mission to the Central African Republic to discuss the concerns. As a result of his mission, it was agreed with the Prime Minister of the Central African Republic, Nicolas Tiangaye, that the Task Force should continue to

operate in the Central African Republic to combat the LRA threat. The Task Force had suspended its operations in the Central African Republic on 23 April as a result of the Séléka offensive against Bangui.

2. The enhancement of efforts to promote the protection of civilians

45. The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deployed troops to Ango in February 2013. However, the force's limited presence combined with poor road access hampers a timely and adequate response to protect civilians.

46. MONUSCO forces enhanced patrols and have carried out operations jointly with the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in "vulnerable" areas in Haut-Uélé in efforts to enhance protection. In Dungu, MONUSCO is working with communities on early warning mechanisms and also continues to assist in the elaboration of community protection plans. MONUSCO has also been providing logistic support to Vodacom in the setting up of telephone network signals in Niangara, Bangadi, Doruma and Ango for use in early warning.

47. As part of actions to enhance the protection of civilians, and ensure better accessibility to the population, MONUSCO continued the rehabilitation of key axes. The rehabilitation of 45 km on the Dungu-Ngilima axis is set to be completed in June 2013 and will be followed by work on the Duru-Nambiapay axis. The latter will help in fostering cross-border community discussions on issues of common interest, including exchange of information on movements of suspected LRA elements. As part of the support provided to the authorities, MONUSCO facilitated a first contact between the Dungu Territory Administrator and his South Sudanese counterpart. A cross-border meeting to discuss LRA and other issues is also planned to help to achieve better security coordination and improve economic activities and exchanges between the two communities.

48. UNICEF and its partners continue to support women and children escaping or rescued from LRA. This includes support for interim care as well as national and cross-border family tracing, reunification and reintegration. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 80 per cent of those children were identified through a system of mobile teams made up of a psychosocial worker, a nurse and a protection officer. They are part of an innovative approach applied in 12 localities in Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé. The aim is to reach children affected by LRA who had been unaccounted for and to ensure that community-based mechanisms operate even in remote villages. Child committees linked to local non-governmental organizations have been created and continue to liaise with child protection mobile teams for identification and referral of cases.

3. Expansion of current disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration activities to cover all LRA-affected areas

49. With the financial support of Germany, the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations led the development of a series of standard operating procedures on the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of LRA, in consultation with the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic, MONUSCO, UNMISS, UNOCA, the Department of Political Affairs, the African Union, and representatives of regional Governments and other United Nations partners. Planning is ongoing for translation and roll-out of the standard operating

procedures. A regional sensitization project aimed at encouraging defections of LRA members through the use of locally broadcast music and messaging was conducted in LRA-affected areas, also with the support of Germany.

50. MONUSCO has conducted an evaluation of the prevailing disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration strategy and practices in Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé districts, along with a review of the Assembly Point project. The review of the Assembly Point project underlined the sound basis of its methodology but revealed that the Assembly Points approach — entailing the defection and controlled surrender of LRA ex-combatants in combination with applied military pressure — requires further strengthening. Prior to the recent crisis in the Central African Republic, the Assembly Point model was replicated successfully in the country through disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration partners working with UPDF and the United States Africa Command. Coordination between the systems in both the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is envisioned as a logical follow-up action. The evaluation also highlighted the continuing need for the establishment of reintegration and rehabilitation options for adult Congolese LRA escapees and combatants, as, to date, no programmes targeting this group are available.

51. MONUSCO is exploring the possibility of creating a mission-level inter-agency working group specific to LRA issues. Currently in the development stages, the initiative is in direct follow-up to recommendations resulting from a UNOCA-led experts meeting on implementation of the LRA strategy held in Entebbe in February, during which the improvement of country-level coordination mechanisms was identified as a priority.

4. Promotion of a coordinated humanitarian and child protection response in all LRA-affected areas

52. During the reporting period, cross-border information-sharing among the humanitarian country teams in the affected areas was further strengthened. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued to issue quarterly regional updates on the humanitarian situation and response in LRA-affected areas. Through a collective approach, including the humanitarian country teams in LRA-affected areas, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supported the revision of the "Regional overview of needs and response in LRA-affected areas". That document was submitted to the Security Council in April as an annex to the implementation plan.

53. The regional overview identifies three strategic priorities to meet the urgent life-saving needs of vulnerable people in LRA-affected areas, namely (a) reduce morbidity and mortality by ensuring that people have access to basic needs and services such as food, health, nutrition and emergency education; (b) strengthen protection for at-risk populations by helping to address grave human rights violations, reunite children with their families, release children from association with LRA and reduce and respond to gender-based violence; and (c) improve living conditions, strengthen resilience and support the empowerment of LRA-affected people in the region.

54. Based on the 2013 humanitarian appeals in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, the regional overview presents

estimated financial gaps of about US$ 84 million required to respond to humanitarian needs in LRA-affected areas in the three countries. This estimate does not include nationwide projects (also targeting LRA-affected areas) already included in the existing humanitarian appeals for the three countries.

55. Humanitarian agencies continued their efforts to respond to needs while promoting, where possible, return and recovery programmes. The top priorities for strengthening the humanitarian response in the LRA-affected region include improving access, particularly through greater logistical capacity, as well as strengthening the response capacities by bringing in more operational partners, in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

56. With the improvement in the security situation in South Sudan, about 21,000 displaced people returned to their places of origin in Yambio and elsewhere in Western Equatoria State. Verification exercises that humanitarian partners undertook in those displacement areas in 2012 revealed that most of the remaining internally displaced persons are generally integrated into host communities close to their places of origin, often "commuting" to farm their lands. In this context, humanitarian partners have agreed that the focus on the internally displaced persons in Western Equatoria State should be transitioning from humanitarian to recovery and development. Meanwhile, UNHCR is continuing its protection and assistance activities for the nearly 20,000 refugees in the two camps in Western Equatoria State and one camp in Central Equatoria State.

57. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, some 347,000 remained displaced in the Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé districts of Orientale Province, due to continued LRA activities. Humanitarian partners extended their reach in Bas-Uélé to newly assessed areas where attacks previously went unreported until abductees could escape and identify their places of origin. However, the overall humanitarian presence in Bas-Uélé is still very limited, with few non-governmental organizations, inadequate funding and limited engagement of local authorities in assisting people in need. Protection activities and assistance programming need to be strengthened further, in particular in Haut- and Bas-Uélé, and should be complemented by more long-term recovery and development efforts.

58. Despite the existing LRA threats, a timid return trend of internally displaced persons continues to be observed, particularly towards the main cities such as Dungu, Faradje and Niangara (Haut-Uélé). In that context, humanitarian agencies are implementing a mixed approach: continuing humanitarian assistance while encouraging early recovery activities where possible. Several projects funded by the Democratic Republic of the Congo pooled fund were implemented in the sectors of food security, health, essential household items, protection, education, logistics, water, sanitation and hygiene, early recovery, etc. In 2013, humanitarian agencies in the LRA-affected areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have funding gaps of at least $63 million. Besides assistance and protection projects, other priorities in LRA-affected areas include improving roads and bridges to facilitate humanitarian access and the potential for trade; building basic infrastructures; and implementing income-generating activities.

59. In the south-eastern Central African Republic, there are an estimated 24,000 LRA-related displaced people, including 21,000 internally displaced persons. Humanitarian programmes in LRA-affected areas have been seriously hampered by

insecurity related to the Séléka rebel activity. Limited funding for the south-east has caused some non-governmental organizations to phase out or reduce their activities, resulting in a substantial decrease in humanitarian projects since 2012. In that context, there is a need to increase humanitarian funding, particularly in the areas of food security, protection, health, logistics and early recovery. Humanitarian agencies require at least $20 million to respond to these needs in 2013.

60. By April 2013, the World Food Programme (WFP) had provided food assistance to over 70,000 beneficiaries in the LRA-affected areas of Haut- and Bas-Uélé. In total, WFP assisted about 620,000 people from 2009 to 2012. Some of the ongoing activities include emergency school feeding, food for work and nutrition programmes. WFP also distributes food in the Dungu, Ango and Faradje territories, for newly displaced people. In Orientale Province, LRA elements in small groups are still present in various areas of Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé mainly in Duru-Doruma, the Ngilima-Bangadi-Niangara triangle and Gramba National Park.

61. UNICEF continues to work in partnership with United Nations missions and other offices monitoring and reporting on protection activities and with child protection focal points to ensure that children associated with LRA are referred to the appropriate channels for tracing, reunification and reintegration.

5. Provision of support to LRA-affected Governments in the fields of peacebuilding, human rights, rule of law and development, to enable them to establish State authority across their territory

62. During the reporting period, MONUSCO continued to work with local authorities and civil society to strengthen their capacities. In the framework of the restoration of State authority, MONUSCO organized a meeting on 30 January 2013 in Dungu, where district authorities and civil society agreed on priority areas for Haut- and Bas-Uélé. Meanwhile the construction by the International Organization for Migration of a police station for the protection of children is under way in Dungu.

63. In the justice sector, MONUSCO continued to provide logistic support to improve security and living conditions at Dungu prison. The organization of mobile sessions by a military tribunal, in April, in Dungu, with MONUSCO support, will help to decrease the number of pre-trial inmates. Due to LRA attacks in the past, several police stations were closed. MONUSCO is currently working with the Police nationale congolaise in identifying ways to reopen them. On 20 April, a police substation will be reopened in Gangala na Bodio with MONUSCO support.

64. During the reporting period, MONUSCO continued to work with local authorities and civil society organizations to strengthen their capacities. MONUSCO provided logistic support to the Dungu Territory Administrator to reach out to local authorities and to victims of LRA in remote localities. MONUSCO is also supporting civil society organizations with capacity-building on early warning systems and information-sharing.

65. Human rights assessment missions were organized to Ango, related to the conflict between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Mbororo community, who have been suspected of cooperating with LRA by the population. These allegations could not be confirmed.

66. Since 2011, the United Nations has been implementing a joint programme on peacebuilding and development in LRA-affected communities in northern Uganda through funding from the Peacebuilding Fund. The programme has helped to strengthen human rights, accountability and governance capacity in government and non-governmental bodies. The programme also improved public awareness and empowered grass-roots groups on advocacy, including on issues of reparation. Districts have lobbied for financial support to build monuments, conduct memorials and carry out reconciliation activities for LRA victims. The programme has also built the capacity of the Uganda Human Rights Commission to document human rights violations conducted during the LRA conflict. Increased community awareness and support of women and children returning from LRA has been achieved through hundreds of community dialogues in 72 sub-counties. This has led to communities becoming more sympathetic to the women and children affected by armed conflict, leading to more cohesive and organized community life.

67. At the time of writing of this report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was finalizing a report on the human rights abuses committed in the region affected by the Lord's Resistance Army, covering all LRA-affected countries. It documents the human rights abuses committed by LRA from its formation in 1987 until 2012. It also recounts how national armies, which were supposed to protect civilians, ended up subjecting them to more rights violations, including murder, torture, illegal detention and sexual violence.

68. The report finds that LRA systematically violated international human rights and humanitarian law by subjecting civilians to summary executions, attacks, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, abductions, forced conscriptions, sexual violence, slavery, displacement, widespread pillaging, poor living standards, lack of access to health care, education and work, as well as the outright denial of the freedom of conscience, thought and religion. The report finds that LRA is responsible for more than 100,000 deaths, that from 60,000 to 100,000 children are believed to have been abducted by the rebel group and that 2.5 million civilians have been displaced as a result of its incursions.

V. Observations and recommendations

69. I am greatly concerned about the situation in the Central African Republic and its impact on peace and security in the subregion. The precarious situation of internally displaced persons and of refugees in the Central African subregion, as well as the general situation of human rights abuses caused by armed conflicts and other crises, calls for urgent attention, support and response by the international community. I commend ECCAS for taking the lead in finding peaceful solutions to the crises in the subregion through dialogue and negotiation, with the support of the African Union.

70. There is an urgent need to help to restore security and stability in the Central African Republic and to stop the ongoing assault against the population. The Security Council must act quickly to protect the people of the Central African Republic and prevent the potential spillover effects of the conflict to the entire subregion.

71. The international community needs to send a strong message to Séléka leaders that there is no impunity for murder, looting, and unconstitutional changes of

government. I call upon the Security Council to consider sanctions and other steps against those who have committed gross human rights violations, including sexual violence against women and children.

72. It remains a priority for States in the region to improve their electoral rules and procedures to allow popular participation, as well as to establish more accessible institutions to ensure representative governance.

73. I am encouraged by the recent decision of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States to create a permanent council for sustainable development for the fight against poverty (poverty which breeds terrorism), and a permanent security council to send the terrorists out of the Sahel and the Sahara. This falls in line with global efforts, particularly those of the United Nations, to fight terrorism in the world, particularly in the Sahel region.

74. Poaching and its potential linkages to other criminal, even terrorist, activities constitute a grave menace to sustainable peace and security in Central Africa. In this regard, I urge Governments of the subregion to consider the issue of poaching as a major national and subregional security concern requiring their concerted and coordinated action.

75. I welcome the commitment of the Cameroonian authorities to host the regional Summit on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea in June within the framework of efforts to implement the recommendations made by the Security Council in its resolution 2018 (2011). I encourage the various Member States, ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to spare no efforts for the success of the Summit and to continue to work together to address the growing threat of maritime insecurity and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

76. I take note of the potential threats that could be posed to peace and stability in Central Africa by the high rate of youth unemployment and encourage national authorities to continue ongoing efforts to address this challenge through the provision of appropriate skills training and creation of employment opportunities for this important segment of their populations. UNOCA will continue to work closely with ECCAS and other subregional, regional and international partners and stakeholders to coordinate efforts to organize the proposed subregional conference on youth employment, political stability and peace consolidation.

77. In order for Central African States to respond to the challenges related to women's rights and gender equality, I urge Governments in the region to fulfil their obligations to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, as articulated in the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and to take measures to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

78. I commend the continued commitment of the Governments of the LRA-affected countries to address the threat posed by LRA. The crisis in the Central African Republic has been a major challenge to this commitment. I am concerned about the risk that, if the tracking of LRA elements is weakened, the armed group could re-emerge as a source of danger and insecurity to countries in the subregion.

79. I welcome the progress made in efforts to address the threat posed by LRA, notably in the finalization of a prioritized and sequenced implementation plan to support the United Nations regional strategy. In this regard, I commend the contributions of LRA-affected countries, non-governmental organizations, as well as

United Nations entities and other partners, and encourage them to fully implement the plan. I particularly call on the international community to provide the requisite support to fund the implementation plan.

80. In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to the Governments of Central African countries, ECCAS, the African Union, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other subregional and regional institutions, for their close and continued cooperation with UNOCA. I thank the various entities within the United Nations system working in Central Africa, including the heads of United Nations peace operations, regional offices, country teams and other relevant entities, for their support and cooperation with UNOCA. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, Abou Moussa, and the staff of UNOCA as well as members of the United Nations country team in Gabon for their continuing efforts to advance peace and security in Central Africa.